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May 22nd, 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM

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Benedicto C, Donovan JL, Field TS, Gurwitz JH, Foy S, Harrold LR, Kanaan AO, Lemay CA, Mazor KM, Tjia J, Valluri S, Briesacher BA. (2012). A Mixed-Methods Study To Characterize Pharmaceutical Marketing in the Nursing Home Setting: Off-Label Use of Atypical Antipsychotics. UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Science Research Retreat. Retrieved from [https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cts\\_retreat/2012/posters/5](https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cts_retreat/2012/posters/5)

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# **A MIXED-METHODS STUDY TO CHARACTERIZE PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING IN THE NURSING HOME SETTING: OFF-LABEL USE OF ATYPICAL ANTIPSYCHOTICS**

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**FUNDING:** This study was supported by R18 HS019351 from the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Despite FDA warnings that atypical antipsychotic medications are associated with an increased risk of death when used to treat behavioral disorders in older adults with dementia, they are prescribed to nearly one-third of older U.S. nursing home (NH) residents. Reasons for their high use in NHs are poorly understood, but may include pharmaceutical marketing efforts in the NH setting.

**Methods:** This study is nested within an ongoing cluster randomized trial to improve the use of atypical antipsychotics in NHs. We analyzed semistructured interviews (n = 36) and surveys (n = 139) of administrators, directors of nursing and medical directors from 62 NHs in Connecticut. Using prescription drug claims from a national long-term care pharmacy, we arrayed study NHs into lowest to highest tertile of atypical antipsychotic use. We tested for differences in the receipt of information or clinical tools from pharmaceutical company representatives (PCRs) to manage dementia-related behaviors by medication use tertiles, adjusting for NH profit status, size, quality (overall, health inspections, staffing) and staffing measures (daily nurse hours per resident).

**Results:** Average baseline use of atypical antipsychotics ranged from 6.6 to 44.3 percent of all residents in the facility. Approximately one-quarter of NH leaders presently receive information on dementia-related behavioral management strategies from PCRs through detailing, in-service training, written or Web-based material or sponsorship as speakers. However, we did not detect statistically significant

differences in the receipt of information by level of atypical antipsychotic use, NH characteristics, quality and staffing measures.

**Conclusions:** This first attempt to characterize pharmaceutical marketing within the NH setting did not find differences among reports of marketing efforts with respect to medication use and facility-level characteristics. However, studies across a wider geographic area should continue investigating the possible role of marketing efforts on overall use and choice of atypical antipsychotics in the NH setting.